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CHINESE TEXTILES

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART



CHINESE TEXTILES

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE
STUDY OF THEIR HISTORY, SOURCES
TECHNIQUE, SYMBOLISM, AND USE

BY

ALAN PRIEST

AND

PAULINE SIMMONS

A NEW AND REVISED EDITION

NEW YORK

1934

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PREFACE

This volume was originally written as a handbook to accompany a special exhibition of Chinese court robes and accessories presented by the Museum in December, 1931. It does not pretend to be anything more than an introduction to the study of Chinese textiles, but it has seemed to meet so definite a need that it is now being reprinted with some changes and corrections. We have tried to give enough of the early historical background of Chinese textiles to indicate their importance in any general study of weaves and needlework, but discussion of specific examples has necessarily been confined to the pieces in our own collection.

The Museum has acquired in the last few years a collection of Ch'ing dynasty textiles which is certainly the most important and extensive group outside the Imperial Palace Museum in Peking. The nucleus came by bequest from William Christian Paul, who had for many years been ambitious to make an outstanding collection for this Museum. His history as a collector is unique in the annals of the art world, and the Museum is deeply indebted to him not only for his remarkable gift but also for the impetus which his generosity gave to this hitherto neglected phase of Chinese art.

A number of other gifts greatly enrich the collection. Notable among them are a sacrificial robe of the Em-

PREFACE

peror Ch'ien Lung and a nineteenth-century robe said to have been worn by the Regent T'zū Hsi, usually referred to as the "Empress Dowager," given by Mrs. William H. Bliss; an imperial court robe embroidered with seed pearls and coral, the gift of Robert E. Tod; a needlework valance, several gorgeous Ming embroideries, and a large Cantonese satin hanging of the early nineteenth century bequeathed by Mrs. H. O. Havemeyer; and a pair of superb *k'o ssü* panels of the Ch'ien Lung period, the gift of Mrs. John F. Seaman. The collection is further enhanced by a remarkable group of court robes assembled in Peking by Dr. John W. Hammond, who has generously allowed them to remain on loan in the Museum over a period of years.

These, with the eighteenth-century theatrical robes purchased by the Museum in 1930 and another unusual theatrical robe which was a loan from Louis V. Ledoux at the time of the exhibition but which we have since purchased, make a collection which does justice to the splendor of the civilization of China and to the art of fine weaving and needlework in which that country has for so many centuries excelled.

Unfortunately, there is not at present space in our galleries to show the textile collection, but it is available to visitors in the Far Eastern Textile Study Room.

ALAN PRIEST

PAULINE SIMMONS

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CHINESE TEXTILES

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The period we live in has witnessed the destruction of many things that other men created and fostered with the whole energy and passion of which human beings are capable, and that once completed they held precious and preserved until a young and impatient generation destroyed them. Among these the fall from power of the Emperor of China, who bore no less a title than the Son of Heaven, with the repudiation of the tradition which had been fostered for four thousand years or more until it governed the lives of some four hundred millions of human beings is the most tremendous cultural cataclysm in the history of the world. That gorgeous court whose every ceremony was ordered by sumptuary law and inextricably interwoven with the thought and life of the race has been swept away, and we have left only the inanimate shells, the robes these people wore, the sterile rules of functions, and paintings, to give us an understanding of what they were and how they lived. Of these, the clothes, both ordinary and ceremonial, are the quickest and most universal, for they appeal to the instinct for adornment which seems natural to all life, except that whereas the peacock spreads its tail and the bright-winged moth flutters its wings with very little

choice, with human beings it is quite a different matter—they have been forced to create the ornaments which nature has denied them. And while clothes have for a long time been of importance to the races of this world, never have they been developed to such an all-embracing indication of the wearer's place in the social order as they were at a very early date in China.

The great mass of Chinese textiles which have been preserved dates from the Ch'ing dynasty (1644-1912), and here the complications and extent of the problem are bewildering, for we find not only the various robes prescribed for the emperor at the state ceremonies but also costumes for princes of all ranks, for husbands of daughters of the emperor by the empress and by concubines as well; for nobles of the blood, and for eighteen ranking officials, nine civil and nine military; for servants and eunuchs, for Chinese and Manchus, for merchants and coolies, for actors and prostitutes; and the worst of it is that, rigid as these regulations were, most of them were never properly written down but were to a great extent transmitted by custom. The *Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien* ("Institutions of the Ch'ing Dynasty") gives a certain number of sumptuary laws, but it is by no means complete, and the student has to deal with the most care-free explanations of scholars (many of them actually ex-officials), to whom it had never occurred to think about the why and wherefore of the clothes they themselves wore, and with the yarns of Chinese dealers and teachers bent on pleasing their clients and entirely uninterested

in accuracy. The result is that the Westerner, with his passion for dates and cataloguing, is in for a long period of sifting the material and testing the statements which have been made, before he gets anything like a complete survey of Chinese textiles. Certain things we do know and we know how to go about finding out others, but it is well to go gingerly.

The invention of clothing is ascribed to the legendary period in Chinese history called the Period of the Five Kings, and the discovery of silk is accorded to the Empress Lei Tsu, also known as Hsi-ling-shih, who was the wife of Huang Ti, the third of the Five Emperors. As the patroness of silkworms she is still worshiped in China and up to the time of the Revolution was recognized by the state in an annual sacrifice by the reigning empress, at a special altar, the Hsien Tsan T'an, which stands in an inclosure at the northeastern part of the Pei Hai (the most northerly of the "Three Seas," the artificial lakes which, with their palaces, temples, and gardens, supplement the Forbidden City). This sacrifice was made in the Third Moon at the same time that the emperor was conducting the sacrifices at the great Altar of Agriculture, which lies inside the south gate of the city of Peking, across from the Temple of Heaven. While Lei Tsu makes a proper and charming patroness of silk, it seems likely that silk did not come into much use until the Chou dynasty. In the *Mémoires concernant l'histoire . . . des Chinois*¹ we find the statement:

¹ Quoted in Werner, *Descriptive Sociology*, vol. IX, p. 268.

All the ancient writers agree in saying that Yao, Chun, and Yu were clothed in simple cloth in summer and skin in winter. The silk which the wife of Huang Ti had discovered had disappeared. The celebrated and learned author of the *Shuo Wên* has proved that all the characters into the formation of which the ideogram for silk enters do not go back before the Chou dynasty, and that all those that refer to the clothes of the ancients are only composed of the ideograms for hair and hemp.

From the Han dynasty on we have more information about the weaving of silk, chiefly because Europe was by that time buying it. In the second century B. C. the Chinese became known to the Graeco-Roman world as the Ser, or Seres, the people from whom was obtained the precious fabric known by the Greek-formed adjective Serika, or Serik, from which is derived the term silk. A little earlier the name China had also come into use, beginning in the brief but violent Ch'in dynasty (which preceded the Han) as Sin or Chin and growing through the forms Sines and Sinico to "China." This name was first heard of in the West through the Greek geographers of the Ptolemaic school. However, for centuries the scholars of Europe made no connection between the Seres and the inhabitants of the country known as China, thinking of them as two distinct peoples, and it was not until the time of the explorations of the Jesuits in the seventeenth century that the error was corrected.

Our study of textiles begins with the Han dynasty, since reliable documentary evidence goes back no further, and it is not confined to textiles alone, for we have also the testimony of the figures in the reliefs from the

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Wu tombs, the patterns on the Han painted vases, the Han lacquers from Korea, and the Han tomb figures themselves. For types of costumes one may study the painting of the Admonitions of the Instructress, attributed to Ku K'ai Chih (about 344-406), which gives us at least a reflection of the fourth century. From the beginning of the sixth century throughout the remainder of the Wei dynasty and through the T'ang and Sung dynasties we have a record in the wall paintings from the cave temples of Tun Huang of types of costumes, coiffures, and patterns. From the Sung dynasty on there is a wealth of material in paintings, but it is not until we reach the Ch'ing dynasty that we find any great quantity of actual textiles which we can date with much security.

SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF CHINESE TEXTILES

Everything we know about Han textiles has been learned since 1913, although one of the important links in the evidence was actually discovered in 1907. It was in that year that Sir Aurel Stein on his first expedition to Tun Huang found in refuse heaps, besides other textiles of later date, two fragments of polychrome figured silk which by the evidence of exactly dated records discovered with them must be assigned to the first century B. C. These two fragments formed the basis of identification for the figured tissues excavated by Stein on his second expedition to Turkestan, in 1913-1915, at the grave site

of Lou-lan, and the importance of these now established Han fragments cannot be overestimated, particularly in the light they throw on the history of weaves and the evolution of pattern. There is every reason to believe that most of these textiles date from at least the first century B. C.,² but the *terminus ad quem* could not be later than the third century A. D. Since the Stein discoveries included a host of exciting things besides textiles, it was necessarily a matter of several years before they could be published. In 1921 *Serindia* appeared, comprising five large volumes. In analyzing the textiles Stein had the collaboration of Miss F. M. G. Lorimer, a special assistant, and of Fred H. Andrews, head of the Amar Singh Technical Institute, Srinagar, Kashmir. Together they produced an adequate technical description of these fragments,³ most of which had to be got immediately between glass to keep them from crumbling. The Stein expeditions were republished in 1928 in *Innermost Asia* with additions and corrections. In 1924 most of the ob-

² Stein, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. XXXVII, p. 5.

³ On the basis of the drawings and photographs of these fragments in *Serindia* and the *Burlington Magazine* (see footnote 2), questions have arisen about the analyses of some of the weaves as published. Since the fragments are for the most part in India a proper study is not now possible; we did, however, check one of the questioned weaves in London and found it to be exactly as described. The drawing of this fragment, however, was misleading and we are therefore inclined to believe that the fault lies with the illustrations, not with the analyses.

jects were transferred from Srinagar to the British Museum, but a few years ago the greater part of the collection was sent to the Museum of Indian Ethnography, Art, and Archaeology at New Delhi and is now comparatively inaccessible to students. The few textile fragments which were given to the British Museum and to the Victoria and Albert are mostly T'ang and were excavated in 1907 on the first expedition.

In 1926 more Han textiles came to light in Mongolia and Chinese Turkestan. These were discovered by Colonel Peter Kozl6v and included besides numerous fragments a complete costume. With the exception of the embroideries a full description of the Kozl6v textiles, which are the property of the Hermitage Museum in Leningrad, has been published only in Russian. As the embroideries included a great many more stitches than the Stein textiles did,⁴ it is conceivable that new discoveries about weaves will be made when a thorough analysis of the Kozl6v textiles is possible.

So much for the Han textiles, but a great deal remains to be said by future historians about these the earliest examples of silk textiles yet discovered. They precede by some centuries the silks preserved in the Mediterranean region, but because many of the present comparative studies of textiles were published before these fragments came to light, China has not as yet been acclaimed for the important part she has played in this art.

Little is known about Chinese textiles in the centuries

* ⁴ Symonds and Preece, *Needlework through the Ages*, p. 80.

between the Han and T'ang dynasties. This is understandable in the light of Chinese history. The country was embroiled in almost constant warfare for nearly four hundred years after the Hans; trade with Central Asia and the Near East was interrupted; and, though a few monuments of these times survive, no traces of the more delicate arts have been found. The Han textiles were saved only because they were located in sites near the abandoned trade routes with Central Asia where there was little activity through the centuries following their burial. With the advent of the T'ang dynasty the Chinese gladly gave themselves over to peaceful occupations, and foreign trade flourished again. They were a vigorous and resourceful race, and the influence of Buddhism gave the necessary impetus to their craving for expression through the arts. In this period China produced the greatest painters, sculptors, and poets she has ever had and indeed some of the world's greatest. The so-called minor arts flourished no less abundantly, and the textiles which survive are numerous enough to give proof of the high artistic and technical ability of Chinese weavers. A great many T'ang textile fragments were found in Chinese Turkestan, some by Stein on his first expedition (see above), others by Albert von Le Coq and Albert Grünwedel in 1904 and 1905. Most of those found by the German archaeologists are now in the Völkerkunde Museum in Berlin; they have been published in *Chotscho*, but the analysis of weaves is unfortunately very brief although the illustrations are ex-

cellent. Besides these T'ang fragments which like the Han are comparatively recent discoveries, a great wealth of pieces is to be found in the Shosoin at Nara, a famous repository of T'ang art. The collection was assembled in the eighth century by the Emperor Shōmu, and it contains a preponderance of Chinese material. Illustrations of most of the pieces in this collection have been published in the *Tōyōi Shukō* but the technical descriptions are so brief that they are practically useless.

The textiles produced in periods subsequent to the T'ang are scattered all over the world, and no scholar has ever attempted to correlate the facts about them. Sung brocades are preserved in the mountings of paintings and in the coverings of Japanese tea utensils, and a small number of pictorial *k'ō ssū* (silk tapestry) *kakemono* exist. Yüan and Ming dynasty textiles, mostly made-to-order church vestments, may be seen among the church treasures and in museums in Europe, their designs often incongruous mixtures of Christian saints set among the phoenixes, the spotted deer, and the floral motives of China. There are not many other textiles which we can safely call Ming except some few examples of brocade, velvet, and *k'ō ssū* to be found in both Oriental and Western collections.

Textiles of the Ch'ing dynasty are those with which we are most familiar and their number is legion. They include practically all of the weaves of earlier periods but few, if any, new weaves. Variations of the basic weaves there are, of course, and innovations in color

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(not always happy ones) as the result of the introduction from the West of aniline dyes.

EARLY WEAVES AND EMBROIDERY STITCHES

A word of explanation is due the reader at this point. A proper record of the weaves and embroidery stitches discussed hereafter should include a detailed technical description of each and, in addition, drawings to illustrate those descriptions. Such a task is out of the question in a volume of this type. It must be done by a scholar who has the means and leisure to make a complete survey of all the textiles at the sources mentioned and of as many others as possible, in order to accomplish a first-hand analysis of the weaves. A study of this sort would, furthermore, permit the material to be collated, something which has never yet been attempted, even on a small scale. Until such a work has been achieved, we must be content to accept the findings of diverse authorities except in cases where we have been fortunate enough to see the textiles themselves. Most of the weaves and embroidery stitches mentioned have Western counterparts, however, which have been carefully analyzed and illustrated by capable authorities, and the untrained student of textiles may use such reference books for explanation of the technical terms found in this volume if he so desires. We have here discussed at length only the weaves least familiar to the West. In the section dealing with examples in the Museum collection we have illustrated

a number of the weaves and stitches in halftones, but these illustrations actually are of little technical value. They are, rather, merely guideposts to a study of the collection, and as such they should prove useful.

WEAVES

The Han textile fragments found at Lou-lan may be classed roughly under three heads, namely, woolen, cotton, and silk fabrics, the last being by far the most numerous and of much the greatest importance from the standpoint of technique and artistic decoration. The woolen fabrics are the most numerous after the silks and comprise at least two specimens of ordinary twill, two pieces of damask, and a number of fine tapestry fabrics. It is important to note here that the patterns of the wool tapestry differ strikingly from the decorative motives of the polychrome figured silks—in fact, are quite non-Chinese and in some pieces are of distinctly Hellenistic character. This seems to be explained by the fact that wool was produced in the greatest quantities in the Tarīm basin⁵ and that the woolen fabrics were undoubtedly for the most part of local manufacture. Fragments of woolen pile carpets were found also, and while the patterns are not clear enough to help identify them, in construction they resemble closely other pile carpet fragments found by Stein which were definitely products of local industry in the Tarīm basin.

⁵ The Tarīm basin is west of Lou-lan but both are in Chinese Turkestan.

The few specimens of cotton and felt found among the Han fragments are not of sufficient importance to be discussed here.

We come now to the silk fabrics. That these silks were made in the interior of China cannot be doubted, and their having been found by the side of the route which the Chinese first opened for their intercourse with Central Asia and the countries of the West makes them doubly interesting. Two important facts about the Han silks are to be noted. In those that show no decorative figuring, a variety of plain cloth weave is always used, corresponding to what is technically known as a rib, or rep, weave. The figured silks, with the exception of a few specimens in monochrome, described as damasks, and a single example of gauze, are all polychrome, the colors rich and harmonious and the weaves of exquisite texture. The warp twill is used in all of these polychrome silks. To make the briefest of explanations of this weave, the figure or pattern is woven in the vertical warp threads, and the fabric presents a kind of dull satin surface, faintly ribbed. This weave appears to have been purely Chinese and an extremely difficult technique. The Egyptians, who had known the weft twill for several centuries, at one time apparently tried to imitate the Chinese warp twill by turning their designs sideways for weaving, but without satisfactory results. By the T'ang dynasty the Chinese had learned the weft twill weave and, since it was far more practical for figured silks than the laborious warp twill technique, they dis-

carded the old method with uncharacteristic promptness.

The one gauze fragment found at Lou-lan is of considerable interest. This weave, which appears to have been made in China ever since, corresponds exactly with the true gauze of the West (technically known as "leno" weave), in which the warp threads instead of lying parallel are arranged in pairs which twist between the wefts. This serves to give firmness to the fabric and at the same time produces a more lacelike effect than a loose plain weave would have. The loose plain weave, similar in appearance to gauze, is made in China, but it is more commonly used as a background for certain types of embroidery than as an end in itself.

We do not find it strange that no examples of tapestry work were found among the silk fabrics, since this is the most fragile of weaves and could scarcely have survived except under extraordinary circumstances. The wool tapestry fragments found attest the fact that the technique was known, at least in the Tarīm basin, during the Han dynasty, and there were discovered among the textiles excavated by Stein on his first expedition a number of silk tapestry specimens now labeled T'ang but which may eventually prove to be earlier. A detailed description of the silk tapestry, or *k'o ssū*, technique is given in the discussion of T'ang weaves, in order to disprove the belief held by many Westerners that it is really needlework, not weaving.

No examples of brocade have been found among the Han textiles thus far discovered, but history records that

in the third century A. D. one of the Chinese emperors sent brocades to the Japanese Empress Jingo. If this is true, the weave undoubtedly was known in the Han dynasty, but no examples earlier than the Sung dynasty are recognized by scholars today.

We cannot in this volume go into a detailed discussion of the evolution of pattern, although it is of tremendous importance in any serious study of textiles. It should be noted, however, that many of these Han silks show animal designs which were certainly as yet uninfluenced by the Occident—the patterns are not symmetrical, nor was any use made of the encircling motive, and we find in the animal and bird motives a very close similarity to those found on the Han reliefs. By the T'ang dynasty, however, Persian influence was rampant and the Chinese silks were turned out, not with their former subtle all-over patterns of rolling clouds, scrolls, and virile beasts, but with confronting animals neatly framed in stiff borders and repeated *ad nauseam*, undoubtedly to please the foreign patrons of China with their ideas of art based on Hellenistic precision and limitation. To one familiar with the pride and almost arrogant independence of the Chinese, it seems well-nigh impossible to accept the theory often put forth that they regarded these patterns as superior to their own; it pleases us rather to believe that they were merely clever enough at that early date to adopt the present-day motto, "The customer is always right."

The T'ang dynasty textiles add to our list two new

and very important weaves which have already been referred to briefly in the discussion of Han textiles. They are the weft twill and *k'o ssü* (silk tapestry) weaves. The weft twill is considered the most important of all weaves and since its discovery has been employed constantly in the weaving of figured silks. The Persian influence on the patterns of the T'ang dynasty leads us to believe that the weave may have reached China via Persia some time between the fourth and the late sixth century.

In our discussion of the silk tapestry weave we use the Chinese name, *k'o ssü*, because Westerners are more or less familiar with the term. More space is devoted to this weave than to the others for two reasons: first, because it is the most prized weave of the Chinese and is the only one which we feel safe in calling purely Chinese; and second, because so many weird stories have been spread about the method of making it. One of the legends that has grown up among Westerners about this weave is that it is really separate pieces of silk cleverly sewed together. An expert on tapestry would of course recognize the weave at once, but since experts are very much in the minority a brief explanation will not be amiss. Chinese *k'o ssü*, made as it is of fine silk, does not in the least resemble Western tapestry, which is usually done in heavy wools, and although they are both produced by the same laborious method the technical achievement of the Chinese is much greater because of the medium employed. The hand loom is used in both

the East and the West and may be either vertical or horizontal, the warp threads taking their direction accordingly. The weft threads are rolled on bobbins, one for each color in the pattern. These weft threads are carried only so far as needed for the various details of the pattern. If the points of juncture of the pattern with the bordering weft colors are extremely small, no attempt is made to connect them, and thus tiny slits are left at the outlines of the pattern. If the points of juncture are larger, the weaver of Chinese tapestries usually interlocks the two adjoining wefts by looping them through each other at the point of contact. This joining is frequently done in other ways by tapestry weavers of the West—by the use of a needle and by still another manipulation of the weft threads—but the result is never so compact as in the method mentioned above and would be much more noticeable in the fine silk *k'o ssü* than it is in woolen tapestry. As a rule, in Chinese tapestry, as in Western, the ends of the weft are left hanging on the reverse side, but we have seen several pieces, one a robe, in which each end of the weft was wrapped about the warp where it terminated and then trimmed short, so that without a magnifying glass the reverse side of the *k'o ssü* could not be distinguished. This painstaking method, which is rare in both Chinese and Western tapestries, is especially remarkable in *k'o ssü* weaving.

The Sung and Yüan dynasties are not definitely accredited with producing any new weaves, but a great deal remains to be discovered about these periods. The

Sung pictorial *k'o ssü* and brocades are supposedly the earliest in existence, although we have tried to ascribe the brocade weave to the Han dynasty (see pp. 13-14)—on rather flimsy historical grounds, it must be admitted.

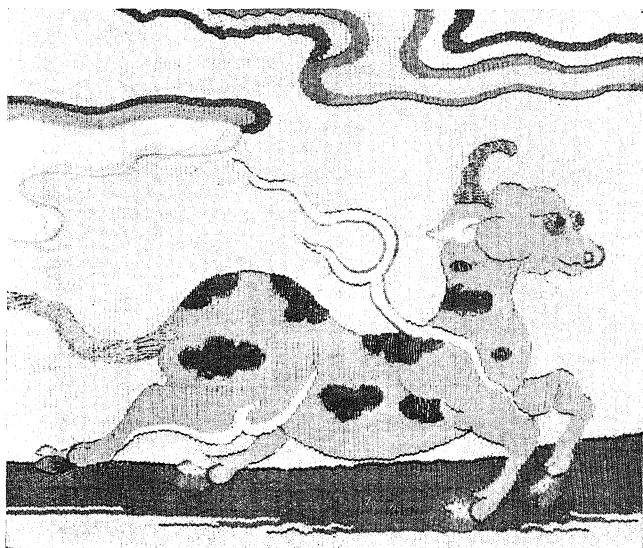


FIG. 1. FRAGMENT OF K'O SSÜ
MING DYNASTY

So far as the pictorial *k'o ssü* is concerned, the technique is the same as in the ordinary *k'o ssü*, of which T'ang fragments exist, but the pictorial examples are really a separate group in that they are definitely designed for kakemono or book covers, and the designs are usually small shrubs and flowers or landscapes.

In connection with the Sung brocades, which, as we have already said, may be found on the mounts of some Sung kakemono and in the coverings of Japanese tea utensils, we should add that we seem to have here also the earliest known examples of the satin weave, since these are satin brocades. It is easy to believe that the



FIG. 2. DETAIL OF THE EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
SHOWN IN FIGURE 21

weave originated in China, because the satin technique is a short step from the figured silks of the Han dynasty, which have much the appearance of satin and which are frequently so called, though wrongly. To the Yüan dynasty, however, seems to go the credit for introducing the satin weave into Europe. It was during the thirteenth century that the Mongols under Genghis Khan extended their power all the way across Asia into Eu-

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rope, and with them came the finest Chinese textiles, which were sold or bartered among the Europeans. Examples of Chinese brocaded satins dating from this period still exist in Europe, and the influence of Chinese



FIG. 3. DETAIL OF THE EMPEROR'S
SACRIFICIAL ROBE SHOWN IN FIGURE 20

patterns on European textiles was tremendous from the fourteenth century on. The textile designs of Italy were completely revolutionized during this period, and those of other countries were affected to a greater or less degree. So far as the satin weave in China is concerned, it has for the last six or seven centuries been the most use-

ful of all weaves and during most of that time has formed the basis for the greater part of the robes, hangings, cushions, and other accessories of the court, which are usually heavily embroidered. There are many variations of the weave in the textiles of present-day China as well as in those of earlier periods.

The earliest velvets of China are at present ascribed to the latter part of the Ming dynasty. This weave presents another knotty problem to be solved, and concerns both Chinese examples and those from other countries. The earliest Italian velvets antedate the earliest Persian, which are of the sixteenth century, yet the latter show such perfection of technique that it is obvious the weave was not new to Persia at that time. Similarly, the beautiful seventeenth-century velvets of China presuppose a considerable experience in velvet weaving. It does not seem likely that the Chinese originated the weave, since their term for velvet is *hui tse jung*, *jung* meaning nap and *hui tse* Central Asian, or in later times Muhammadan. This seems to indicate that it came to China via Central Asia, and quite probably from Persia, though just when we have little idea as yet. The early Chinese velvets are made entirely of silk and in general may be classified as cut voided cloth velvet, ciselé solid satin velvet, and cut solid twill velvet. The voided velvets are also frequently brocaded. We find these so-called Ming examples both in Western collections and in the East, usually in the form of chair covers, small valances or table covers, and fragmentary bits.

CHINESE TEXTILES

EMBROIDERY STITCHES

We find among the Han textile fragments from Central Asia (discussed on pp. 5-7) a surprising number of embroidery stitches, indeed most of the stitches which are known today and which have been the very back-



FIG. 4. DETAIL OF EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
K'O SSÜ, WITH A FRET DESIGN IN GOLD THREAD
CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD

bone of European needlework for several centuries. There are, to be exact, eight different types from this early period, although several of the stitches appear in designs which are certainly more Graeco-Scythian and Scytho-Siberian than Chinese. The Stein textiles show only one of the eight, namely, the loop, or chain, stitch. The Kozlów things, on the other hand, include in addi-



FIG. 5. DETAIL OF THE IMPERIAL COURT ROBE
SHOWN IN FIGURE 6



FIG. 6. IMPERIAL COURT ROBE
K'O SSŬ
K'ANG HSI OR CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD

tion to the loop stitch the knot, couched twist, appliqué, satin, stem, buttonhole, and quilting stitches. The loop stitch when done with very fine thread is frequently mistaken for the knot, or Peking, stitch. It has also been published by at least one writer as the true Peking stitch but we believe with no real authority for the statement. The knot, or Peking, stitch is also called the seed stitch and in China is frequently referred to as the "forbidden" stitch, which it literally is, since the government, alarmed at the number of women going blind from doing it, some years ago passed a law forbidding any further needlework of this type. The couched-twist stitch found on the Han textiles seems to indicate that simple couching was well known at the time, although there are no examples of it in this group. The preliminary step in couched-twist embroidery is to twist two silk threads tightly together so that the effect is that of a very fine knobby braid. These threads are then couched down, sometimes in solid designs and sometimes as outlining for designs embroidered in other stitches. Couching-twist embroidery, like loop-stitch, resembles in its granular texture a very fine knot stitch, but the best examples of couched twist are infinitely more lovely than either of the others.

Appliqué embroidery is very common in Chinese needlework and ranges from rather ordinary examples to the most exquisite work. There are a number of variations of Chinese appliqué embroidery, one of the most usual being the embroidering of separate motives, floral

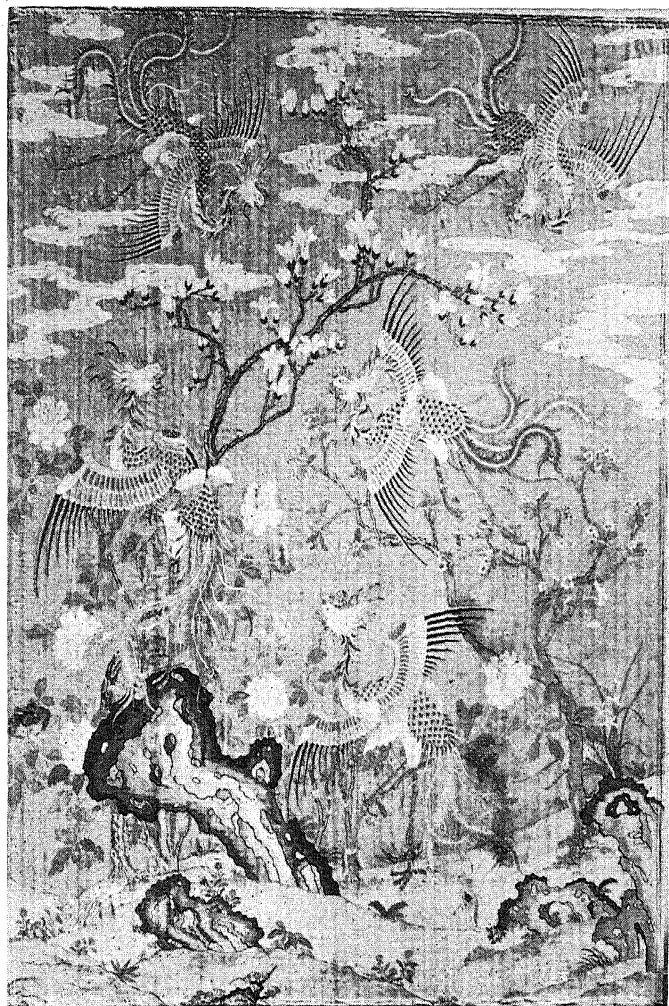


FIG. 7. PANEL: PHOENIXES AND FLOWERING SHRUBS

K'O SSŪ

CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD

or conventional, on canvas or scrim, or sometimes on tough paper, which is then cut down to the pattern, leaving the embroidered motives ready to be applied to any desired surface. This type of appliqué is the least difficult and consequently, in the impatient China of to-day, is most employed. The theory that appliqué embroidery originated with the desire to make the patches on garments beautiful as well as practical seems a likely one.

Since the Han dynasty the satin stitch has been used constantly by the Chinese in their embroideries, the stem stitch more rarely, and the buttonhole and quilting stitches almost not at all.

After the Han dynasty we do not seem to find any new stitches until we come to textiles of the Ming and Ch'ing dynasties, when several new ones appear. Curiously enough, all of these later stitches require a background of gauze, canvas, or a loose plain weave. They could all be called counted canvas stitches, for that is what they actually are, but several of them are designated by specific names borrowed from the West. Two of the best known are the Florentine and petit-point stitches. These are much the same in appearance, and the Florentine is often wrongly called petit point. The difference in technique is slight: the Florentine stitch is darned on the background in vertical lines and the petit point at a 45° angle. Another variation of the counted canvas stitch is known as a surface darning stitch. This we have not found as yet on any examples

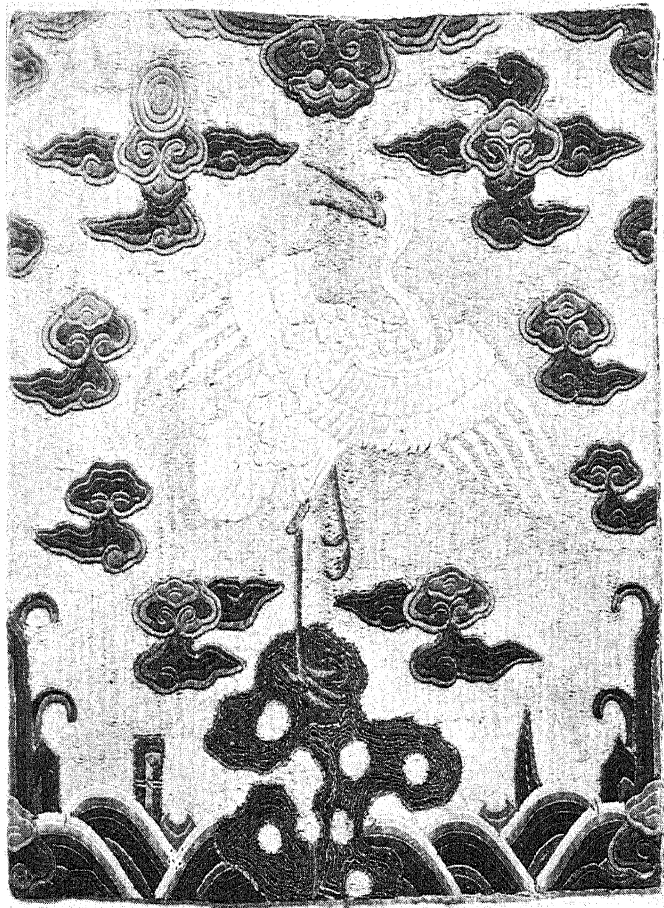


FIG. 8. EASTERN EGRET
INSIGNE FOR CIVIL OFFICIAL OF THE SIXTH RANK
SATIN STITCH ON A BACKGROUND OF COUCHED GOLD THREAD
MING DYNASTY

dating earlier than the eighteenth century.

The origins of these stitches used on gauze are obscure, but it seems reasonable to suppose that they were known centuries earlier than the examples which now exist. After all, they are comparatively simple from a technical standpoint, much more so than some of the Han stitches, although they require the utmost patience in execution. Whatever their history, they are unusually pleasing to the eye and are favorites in China as well as in the West.

EXAMPLES OF WEAVES AND EMBROIDERY STITCHES IN THE MUSEUM COLLECTION

The textiles in our collection are, with a few exceptions, of the Ch'ing dynasty. There is an unfortunate tendency among students of Chinese art to regard the Ch'ing merely as a period of decline in the arts. Although painting and sculpture did fall off badly, many of the lesser arts actually made great gains artistically as well as from the standpoint of technique. And to consider only the textiles, it seems rather presumptuous to adopt a patronizing attitude toward these exquisite fabrics when we recall that most of them were made at a time when we were a land of pioneers wearing unadorned homespun.

Although we have a few Sung brocades on the mounts of early kakemono in the Museum collection, they are not included here because of practical difficulties in showing them with other textiles. The earliest example,

CHINESE TEXTILES

therefore, to be discussed is a fragmentary specimen⁶ which can be dated with some accuracy, since it was part of the pontifical vestments of Pope Benedict XI, who died in Perugia in 1304. This enables us to place it somewhere in the thirteenth century, and while that

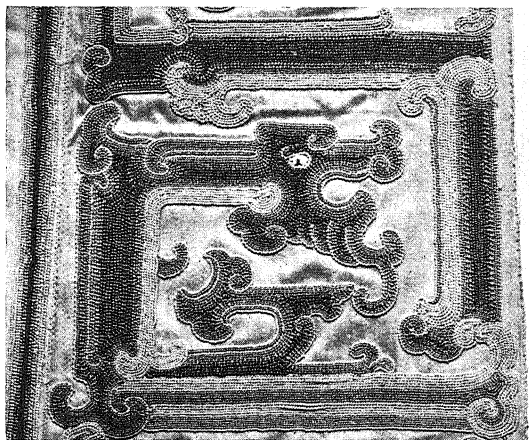


FIG. 9. BORDER DETAIL
OF EMBROIDERED CHAIR-BACK COVER
DESIGN IN COUCHED TWIST
K'ANG HSI PERIOD

may not seem to uphold our assumption of accurate dating, in the field of early Chinese textiles, undocumented as it is, we consider ourselves lucky if we can hit even the century. The brocade in this case is woven of silk and flat strips of leather membrane covered with gold leaf. On later brocades tough paper frequently forms the base for the gold. The method of wrapping gold foil on

⁶ Acquired by purchase in 1919.

silk thread was subsequently evolved by the Chinese and the resulting gold thread is more practical for weaving large patterns and for embroidering than the flat gold strips, but both are still used lavishly.

Several small pieces of brocade in the collection are unquestionably Ming, but since we have not yet had an opportunity to study them thoroughly we prefer not to publish them here.

A number of eighteenth-century brocade court robes⁷ make a colorful group with their rich gold designs against clear colors of every shade. The gold here is of both kinds mentioned above, the flat-paper variety being used only for the faint outlining of colors and the thread gold for the large dragon motives. One very rich court robe in the Paul Bequest has the entire design of dragons, bats, fretwork, clouds, and waves in thread gold woven on a brown satin ground.

One of the earliest pieces of *k'ô ssû* in the Museum collection (except for pictorial examples mounted as *kakemono*, which we have not included in this study because of their closer relation to paintings) is the small panel shown in figure 1.⁸ This piece has the firm ribbed

⁷ Notably those in the collection of Dr. John W. Hammond, now on loan in the Museum.

⁸ This is a substitution for the piece illustrated in the first edition, which we have decided is probably Japanese, although it was originally catalogued by Kihei Hattori, the noted Japanese authority on textiles from whose collection it came, as "probably Chinese."



FIG. 10. MANDARIN DUCK
INSIGNE FOR CIVIL OFFICIAL OF THE SEVENTH RANK
SATIN STITCH ON A SATIN BACKGROUND
EARLY XVIII CENTURY

texture and the bold sweeping design which are typical of Ming *k'o ssü*. Our dating of Ming *k'o ssü* has, strangely enough, to be based on examples of Japanese tapestry (*tsuzure*) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the provenance of which is established beyond question, for China, always as magnificently careless about preserving her art as she was lavish in creating it, has left us with even less documentation from the Ming dynasty than from earlier periods. Luckily in this instance we know that the Japanese learned tapestry-making from the Chinese some time during the Ming dynasty, and it is therefore obvious that their earliest endeavors in this craft would closely resemble the Chinese models. The similarity is so marked, in fact, that in some cases it is almost impossible to tell which is Chinese and which Japanese. The *ch'i lin*, or Chinese unicorn, depicted on the fragment shown here is unmistakably Chinese and is certainly a contemporary of the embroidered animals on the Ming hangings from the Havelmeyer Collection.

Eighteenth-century *k'o ssü* is well represented in the collection. Two imperial court robes, one (fig. 20) from the Paul Bequest, one (fig. 21) acquired after the first edition of this book was issued, are the most extraordinary examples of *k'o ssü* it has been our privilege to see. They are of very fine silk, and so compact is the weave that one can scarcely see the joining threads between ground and design. We are firmly convinced not only that they were made for the same emperor but that they

were actually designed and executed by the same artist. This theory is based chiefly on the identical and extraordinary fineness of the weaves, but the unusual clarity of the colors and the distinction of pattern in the two robes make it an even more plausible supposition. The delicate pastel shades on a powder-blue ground of the Paul robe are quite out of the ordinary for Chinese textiles. As a sheer *tour de force*, however, the other robe is even more magnificent, for in it the intricate cloud pattern fills the entire background and there are four shades of the blues and greens instead of three, and five of the yellow. In addition, the new robe has two different reds, one of them shading from scarlet to salmon pink, the other from ash red to old rose. The combined vividness of color and design added to the quality of the intricate weave makes it supreme amongst the *k'o ssu* robes of this collection or of any that we have ever seen. Both of these were sacrificial robes for the emperor and bear the Twelve Symbols which could be worn by him alone. The robes and the Twelve Symbols are illustrated in figures 20 to 23, and we include also details from each robe (figs. 2, 3) in order to permit a closer view of the design.

Several other important *k'o ssu* robes should be mentioned, notably an imperial robe given by Mrs. William H. Bliss, in which a fretwork of gold thread enhances the *k'o ssu* weave of imperial yellow (detail in fig. 4). On this and on the yellow *k'o ssu* robe in the collection of Dr. Hammond (not illustrated) we have again the Twelve Imperial Symbols. No paint is found on any of

these robes, a fact which helps to date them as not later than the Ch'ien Lung period. That is not to say that paint was never used on pieces earlier than the nineteenth century, but the omission of paint on non-pictorial *k'o ssü* is one of the standards of excellence which was not violated in the best type of work before the nineteenth century. The psychological and practical reasons why the technique of all the arts fell off in the nineteenth century cannot be discussed here, but the fact is, they did, and fell off violently. A *k'o ssü* robe said to have belonged to the famed Empress Dowager, T'zū Hsi, for instance, interesting and lavish as it is, is comparatively coarse work with a horrid mixture of *k'o ssü*, embroidery, and paint. Here the degeneration of workmanship is almost lost sight of in the bold use of gold and vivid colors, the sweeping spread of the phoenix design, and the gay festoons of flowers. It is a perfect example of the bad taste of the Age of Victoria, which was the Age of Victoria all the world round, and the shoddy vulgarities of the period must be considered symptoms of world evolution rather than the fault of Victoria in England or T'zū Hsi in China.

The robe shown in figures 5 and 6, also of *k'o ssü*, is of a heavier thread and, in design, is quite removed from the usual imperial court robes, employing instead of the conventional cloud motive background small dragons and between sixty and seventy different forms of the *shou* character.

A pair of large *k'o ssü* panels presented to the Mu-



FIG. 11. DETAIL OF TEMPLE VALANCE
FLORENTINE STITCH AND GOLD COUCHED DRAGONS ON GAUZE
XVII CENTURY



FIG. 12. DETAIL OF IMPERIAL COURT ROBE
PETIT POINT, WITH GOLD EMBROIDERED DRAGONS ON GAUZE
XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 13. DETAIL OF IMPERIAL THEATRICAL COAT
FLORENTINE STITCH ON GAUZE
XVIII CENTURY

seum some years ago by Mrs. John F. Seaman were certainly palace hangings. As a technical achievement these panels equal and even surpass tapestries of the West, since they are woven of fine silk thread instead of the more easily handled heavy wool and since the design must therefore show greater delicacy of drawing than is necessary in Western tapestries, though on almost as large a scale. The phoenixes and flowering shrubs on these panels are as exquisitely drawn and woven as the designs on any of the small pieces in the collection. Like so many Chinese textiles, we date these panels "not later than Ch'ien Lung," and they are possibly earlier. One of the two panels is illustrated in figure 7.

We have at least half a dozen pieces of velvet which we dare to call Ming and several of later date but, as in the case of the Ming brocades, we prefer to marshal our forces before publishing a discussion of them. Several of the pieces are supremely beautiful from the standpoint of both design and coloring, and they deserve an unhurried analysis.

Gauze has been for centuries popular for summer overgarments in China, and with a contrasting color beneath gives a delicate and shimmery effect. A number of gauze robes are included in the Museum collection, several of them dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and a group from the twentieth century. Since, however, these robes are embroidered in unusual stitches, they are discussed with embroidery stitches rather than with weaves.

In illustrating embroidery stitches from our collection we have taken a large number of our examples from the mandarin squares (civil and military insignia). This is partly because every embroidery stitch known to the Chinese is to be found on these squares, and partly because the embroidery is usually more clear-cut and the design more unified than on larger pieces. In order to get the best example of each stitch, we had unfortunately to illustrate duplicates of the insignia in some cases.⁹

Several Ming hangings from the Havemeyer Collection combine the couching and satin stitches. With their designs of bold floral patterns interspersed with the most amazing birds and animals, they have, despite their badly worn condition, a grandeur and richness of color which are characteristic of the Ming period. No illustrations of these hangings were included since a small reproduction could not do them credit.

Another Ming piece which shows the same two stitches is the mandarin square represented in figure 8. Here a solid background of couched gold thread makes a magnificent setting for the egret and the cloud, wave, and mountain motives embroidered in satin stitch. We have but one other example of this early type of square¹⁰ in

⁹ The symbolism of these insignia and of the designs on the robes is discussed in the section on court robes.

¹⁰ The collection on loan at the Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University, mentioned on page 63, has the finest Ming squares we have ever seen, as well as many other early and unusual types not represented in our collection.

our collection, which is a pity, because one rarely has an opportunity to buy such pieces today, even in China.

The couched-twist stitch, which was included among



FIG. 14. DETAIL OF THE EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
SHOWN IN FIGURE 15

the Han embroideries, is represented by many examples. The rich texture of this exquisite embroidery is apparent in the detail of a chair-back cover illustrated in figure 9 and a magnificent Lamaist priest robe, two details of which are illustrated in figures 39 and 40. In the chair-back cover, the central motive is the five imperial



FIG. 15. EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
BACKGROUND OF DARNING STITCH ON GAUZE
DESIGN IN SATIN-STITCH EMBROIDERY
CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD

dragons in dull blues, grays, and mauve, while in the conventionalized dragon motive of the outer border and in the cloud scrolls and conventionalized *shou* and *wan* characters of the inner border, the colors are soft rose, green, blues, and tans; these richly wrought motives on the imperial yellow ground form a complete whole which, like the delicate *k'o ssu* work, is not of a blatant beauty and must be studied with care to be fully appreciated.

The satin stitch, which is used more or less on almost every mandarin square, is exemplified with particular brilliance in the square illustrated in figure 10, an early eighteenth-century piece which is one of the most beautiful in the whole collection of squares, both in its design (which, by the way, might startle some of the so-called modernist painters) and in the exquisite combination and clarity of its colors.

In a large apricot-colored satin hanging from the Havemeyer Collection the satin stitch appears together with the split and couching stitches, but here the work is markedly different in execution from the examples already discussed and is the product of Cantonese embroiderers. This is the type of embroidery found on the so-called Spanish shawls, many of which were, and still are, actually embroidered in Canton.

The petit point, Florentine, and canvas stitches which are shown on a Lamaist temple banner (not illustrated) of the Ming dynasty are the earliest examples of these stitches that we know of. As they appear on this textile

from Tibet they are between one and two hundred years earlier than any of the purely Chinese examples, which may indicate that the stitches came to China from Tibet, or at least via Tibet. The subject depicted on the temple banner is a representation of the goddess Tara, and although the iconography is rather muddled the colors and needlework are exquisite. This banner is earlier than most of the painted ones and is therefore of documentary importance in the study of Buddhistic history as well as of textiles.

In a seventeenth-century temple valance from the Havemeyer Collection, a detail of which is shown in figure 11, the Florentine stitch is used, and likewise in a beautiful eighteenth-century theatrical robe,¹¹ of which a detail is illustrated in figure 13. The all-over patterns of both the valance and the robe are made to simulate brocade designs, and the effect is that of solid weaving. Against the background of the all-over pattern the temple valance has in addition a design of conventionalized walking dragons embroidered in couched gold thread faintly outlined with black. The robe has a very curious pattern of bats worked in pairs, one apparently representing the bat and the other an evanescent illusion or shadow of the reality. The bat motives are in the Florentine stitch and actually form an integral part of the embroidery although they give the impression of

¹¹ This truly magnificent specimen, which was shown in the exhibition in 1931 as a loan from Louis V. Ledoux, has since been acquired by the Museum.

being superimposed on the brocade-like pattern of the background. Among other examples of this embroidery in the collection are a pair of imperial chair covers and a small panel of floral design. In almost every case the embroidery is used for both design and background.

The petit-point stitch is beautifully exemplified in the Museum collection on one of the most prized imperial robes from the Paul Bequest. A full illustration is not given, since the color contrasts are so slightly defined that no idea of the beauty of the robe can be gained through a halftone, but a detail is illustrated in figure 12 which does show something of the stitch used. The embroidery is done in unusually somber tones for the Chinese, but with their happy instinct for color harmony there evolves from the somberness a softly beautiful garment with dull gold dragons gleaming against the neutral ground. The design of the body is in small conventionalized patterns, mostly worked in outline, so that, although the embroidery covers every inch of the robe, the soft gauziness is retained. This eighteenth-century robe is one of the few gauze robes of so early a date in the collection. A group of twentieth-century ones, most of them with embroidered patterns done in petit-point, Florentine, and other stitches, represent women's summer robes as they are worn today. These are in vivid colors, many of which were obviously produced from Western dyes.

An emperor's sacrificial robe from the collection of



FIG. 16. MANCHURIAN CRANE
INSIGNE FOR CIVIL OFFICIAL OF THE FIRST RANK
LOOP STITCH ON A SATIN BACKGROUND
EARLY XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 17. MANCHURIAN CRANE
INSIGNE FOR CIVIL OFFICIAL OF THE FIRST RANK
PEKING (KNOT) AND SATIN STITCHES ON A SATIN BACKGROUND
EARLY XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 18. LEOPARD

INSIGNE FOR MILITARY OFFICIAL OF THE SECOND RANK
PATTERN AND BACKGROUND BOTH IN PEKING (KNOT) STITCH
LATE XVIII CENTURY

Dr. Hammond, illustrated in figures 14 and 15, is an interesting innovation in the needlework family and belongs in this discussion of embroideries in counted canvas stitch. To the casual eye the fabric appears to be a rich brocade with an unusually vivid embroidered pattern of dragons, bats, clouds, and waves, and in addition the Twelve Imperial Symbols, done in satin and couching stitches. As on closer examination the texture did not seem to be exactly that of brocade, with the owner's permission we loosened the lining in order to study the back of the fabric. Instead of the "floating weft" of brocade which the thick rich exterior had led us to believe was there, we discovered a foundation of red gauze; the diamond pattern of the body proved to be needlework in a surface darning stitch, and a very thin layer of cotton between the gauze and the lining gave the deceptive look of heaviness to the fabric. Although it seems probable that the same effect could have been obtained more easily in a woven material, the fact remains that it is needlework and a most remarkable achievement.

The loop-, or chain-, stitch embroidery used on the square shown in figure 16 is the one type found at Loulan by Stein, and it has been a favorite with the Chinese ever since the Han dynasty. This stitch and the couched-twist and Peking stitches are the most intricate and beautiful of the types of embroidery that originated in China. Our collection contains no examples of loop stitch earlier than this eighteenth-century square.

Examples of the knot, or Peking, stitch are numerous

and range in quality from comparatively coarse work (actually about the equivalent of the average French-knot embroidery) to work so fine that it is almost impossible to tell with the naked eye whether it is the knot

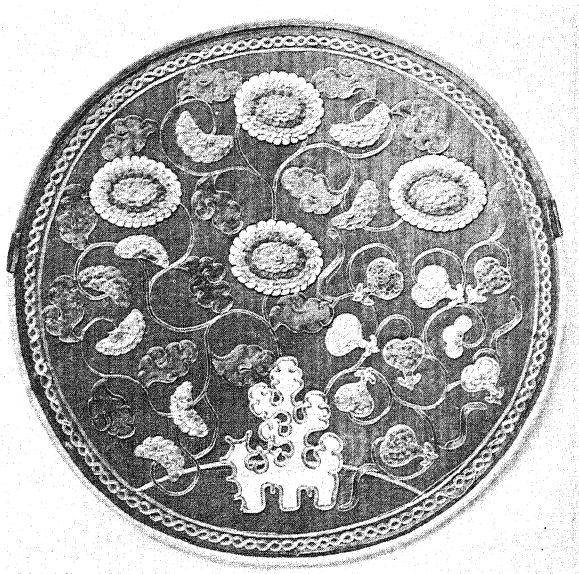


FIG. 19. MIRROR CASE
FLORAL PATTERN IN SILK-THREAD APPLIQUÉ
CH'ÏEN LUNG PERIOD

or the loop stitch. Knot-stitch embroidery is rarely found on pieces larger than the squares or sleeve bands. On the square illustrated in figure 17 it alternates in the design with the satin stitch, and in figure 18 it forms the background as well as the design.

Some of the most striking examples of appliqué em-

broidery in the collection may be seen in the animal motives on the theatrical warrior robes illustrated in figures 34 to 38. This is the sort of appliqué with which we are most familiar. A more intricate form is to be seen on the mirror case illustrated in figure 19. Here the leaves and the fungus growth at the lower part of the design are cut out of satin in the desired patterns, the edges of which are outlined with about a dozen threads laid flat and close together and pasted to the satin, giving the impression of braid, the whole then pasted down to the background of red silk. The stems and sprays have not even the satin foundation — they are simply the proper number of threads to give the desired width, laid down in scrolls and spirals and pasted to the red ground. In the lotus flowers and seed pods, the rows of threads held together in this braid formation are looped and piled row on row in petal shapes, yellow against green against shaded rose tints in the full-blown flowers, and solid greens or yellows in the buds and seed pods, and the whole pattern pasted down, with not a single stitch to strengthen it. An incredible technique to us but almost a commonplace performance for the adept and unhurried Chinese of the eighteenth century.

COURT ROBES AND THEIR SYMBOLS

In the court, in society, each man stood forth clad in the impregnable armor which was his right and due in the structure of the society in which he lived — artificial, as

all society is, but nevertheless logical and standing exactly for his rank or for what he had gained in the particular segment in which he lived. The nine degrees were not hereditary but were attained, as were even dukedoms and kingdoms, for under the Chinese system of government and education, one could, if one wished, go first to local schools, and then by merit advance to county schools and finally to the Imperial Academy, the Han Lin, graduation from which meant an official appointment and a degree from which one might progress rank by rank. And it is not a matter for ridicule that the examinations consisted of original composition in prose and poetry, for success meant a knowledge of the classic literature of the past, and rulers, great and petty, were required to be men of understanding and cultivation, versed in the knowledge of what past generations had found good rules to live by. For the most part they ruled wisely, taxing the people no more than they could bear, and facing the devastating floods and famines with a feeling of responsibility—consider the magistrate Li of Hün Yuan, who threw himself into the raging river to appease the wrath of the gods and so calm the floods, a noble action worthy of being written into the history of the glorious things men have done in the face of the inevitable cruelties of nature.

The emperor moved forward clad in the yellow color symbolic of Earth prescribed by the Emperor Wên of the Sui dynasty. He was the Son of Heaven and thus the



FIG. 20. EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
K'O SSŬ
CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD



FIG. 21. EMPEROR'S SACRIFICIAL ROBE
K'O SSÜ
CH' IEN LUNG PERIOD

intermediary between all the millions of the people of the Middle Kingdom and the powers of Heaven. The broad design of his robes represents the Universe: in the main field of the robe a pattern of clouds symbolizes Heaven; below the clouds is the sea, a pattern of inclined ribbons topped with waves and spray; and in the center of the waves a group of mountains represents the Earth. Nine large five-clawed dragons ramp through the clouds—nine, for are there not Nine Sections in the Science of Mathematics devised by Li Shou for the Emperor Huang Ti; was not the Empire divided into nine provinces by Yu; were there not nine divisions to the “great plan” of the Book of History; are not the great books themselves composed of the Four Books and the Five Classics; are there not Nine Celestial Orbits, Nine Spheres of Heaven; are there not Nine Tenures, Nine Musical Airs; are there not Nine Palaces of Color, Nine Officials employed by the Emperor Shun, Nine Schools of Philosophy, Nine Degrees of Official Rank, Nine Paths to the Moon’s Orbit, Nine Degrees of Relationship, Nine Lights of Heaven?

More than this, on sacrificial robes of the emperor were the Twelve Symbols (*Shih êrh chang*) brought down from the Books of Rites.

I (Yü) wish to see the emblematic figures of the ancients—the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the dragon and the flaming fowl which are depicted on the upper garment; the temple cups, the aquatic grass, the flames, the grains of rice, the hatchet and the symbol of distinction which are embroidered on the

lower garment. I wish to see all these displayed with the five colors, so as to form the official robe.¹²

These twelve symbols have best been described in a memorial on regulations for official costumes, by Yang Chiung, quoted in the *T'u Shu Chi Ch'êng* ("Encyclopaedia of K'ang Hsi").¹³ They are as follows:

1, 2, and 3. The Sun, the Moon, and the Constellation, which symbolize the light of the good and wise king shining upon the world.

4. The Mountain, which distributes cloud and rain and thus symbolizes the beneficence of the good and wise king to his people.

5. The Dragon, ever infinite in its changes, which symbolizes the adaptability of the good and wise king, who publishes his laws and instructions according to the needs of the time.

6. The Flowery Bird, with the five colors on its body, which symbolizes the cultural accomplishments of the good and wise king.

7. The Cups, with the representation of the tiger and the long-tailed monkey, which symbolize the fact that the good and wise king pacifies rebellions with supernatural force as the tiger overpowers things with courage and forcefulness.¹⁴

¹² Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. III (*Shu Ching*), part 1, p. 80.

¹³ Summarized by Mr. Wang Chi-chên.

¹⁴ The original was vague—the writer grouped the tiger and the monkey together as if they signified the same quality, but according to other writers the monkey symbolizes cleverness or

8. The Water Weed, which rises and falls with the water, symbolizing the good and wise king responding to the needs of the time.

9. The Millet, upon which the life of human beings depends, symbolizing the good and wise king as the mainstay of all things.

10. The Fire, which fires pottery, melts metals, and cooks, symbolizing the good and wise king's supreme virtue as daily renewed.

11. The Axe, which can cut and sever, symbolizing the decisiveness of the good and wise king when facing situations.

12. The Symbol of Distinction (*fu*), consisting of two *chi* characters back to back, which symbolizes the working together of the prince and his ministers.

Six imperial robes showing these Twelve Symbols are now in the Museum—the three *k'o ssü* robes discussed on pages 32-33, two of them illustrated in figures 20 and 21, and three belonging to Dr. Hammond, one illustrated in figure 15 and discussed in the section devoted to examples of weaves and embroidery stitches in the Museum collection. The reproductions of the Twelve Symbols in figures 22 and 23 are taken from the two best *k'o ssü* robes.

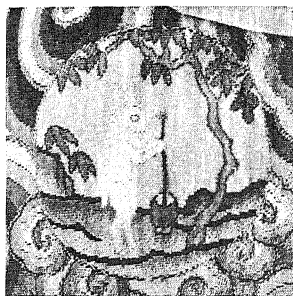
In addition to the Twelve Symbols a motley of Buddhist and Taoist emblems (see pp. 64-76) show in the cunning, because, having its nose tilted skyward, it has sense enough to stop it up with its long tail, so as to prevent the rain from running into its windpipe.—Wang Chi-chen.

waves and are sometimes scattered about in the clouds.

The *Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien* gives elaborate but incomplete regulations for the imperial and court costumes, with illustrations of different types, and one finds much evidence—often conflicting—in the robes themselves. For instance, the pearl-embroidered five-clawed-dragon robe, the gift to the Museum of Robert E. Tod, fits the illustration and description of a ceremonial robe of the empress in every respect save one—the color. Where the *Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien* prescribed yellow, this robe is blue. Is it possible that this robe belonged to that very great lady, T'zū Hsi, whom the modern Occidental always thinks of as “the Empress of China,” who is usually referred to as “the Empress Dowager,” but who in reality, with all her power, never received the title of empress until after her death? And is it possible that with her title of “West Palace” she was entitled only to the blue ground? Suffice it to say that it is not well to be too dogmatic about the regulations of official dress. We have it on the verbal testimony of one of the former officials in the palace that, in general, the reds, oranges, yellows, and purples were colors reserved for the imperial household, but there are exceptions to this. Red is used by all classes for weddings and in funeral catafalques; very small children may wear red and wives for the first year after their marriage; and the priests, both Buddhist and Taoist, wear it in ceremonial robes. Yellow is used extensively by the Buddhist church and appears also in some of the Taoist robes. There is also the ques-



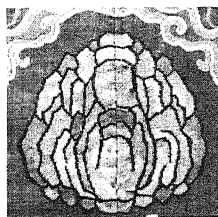
THE SUN



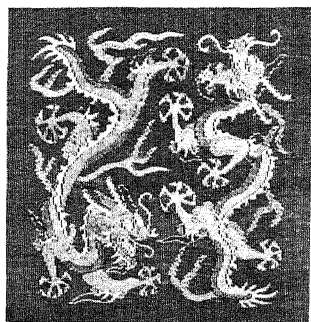
THE MOON



THE CONSTELLATION



THE MOUNTAIN



THE DRAGON



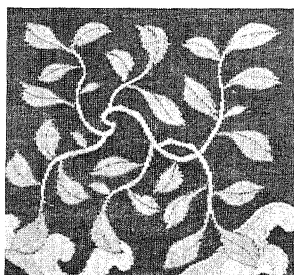
THE FLOWERY BIRD

FIG. 22. SIX OF THE TWELVE IMPERIAL SYMBOLS
FROM THE BOOK OF RITES

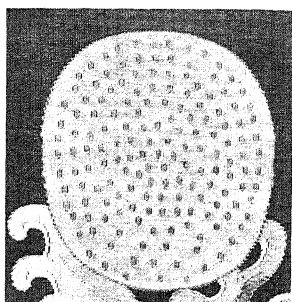
(Shown on the imperial sacrificial robes illustrated in figures 20 and 21)



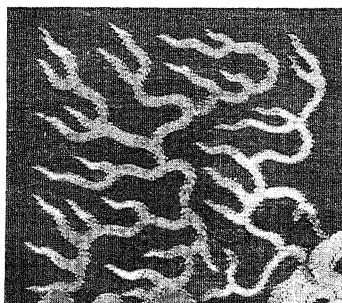
THE CUPS



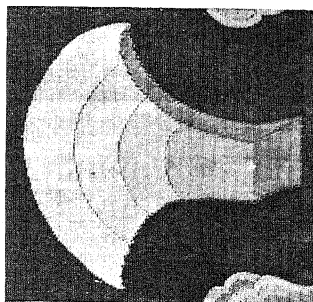
THE WATER WEED



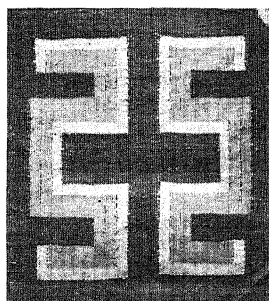
THE MILLET



THE FIRE



THE AXE



THE SYMBOL OF DISTINCTION

FIG. 23. SIX OF THE TWELVE IMPERIAL SYMBOLS
FROM THE BOOK OF RITES

(Shown on the imperial sacrificial robe illustrated in figure 20)

tion of the five-clawed dragon and of the four-clawed dragon which is not a dragon at all but only a *mang*. A common belief is that the five-clawed dragon was worn only by the emperor, but from the rather misty depths of Chinese records we learn that the use of the five-clawed dragon extended at least to princes of the second order. Even so we must believe that the Ch'ing emperors followed the admonitions of the third-century Chang Hua with signal success and let their hearts be united as a swarm of locusts, for the number of five-clawed dragons that come out of China is legion. Nevertheless, it is true that the court of China was a vast institution, and the amount of silk used not only to clothe it but to supply it with hangings, cushions, palanquins, and other accessories was enormous, so that our misgivings as to the authenticity of all of these pieces decorated with the five-clawed dragon may be entirely unfounded.

There is no full account in any one authority of the special insignia for all officials, from the emperor down through the various ranks of nobility and on through the civil and military offices, but by summarizing the information which we find in the *Ta Ch'ing Hui Tien* and in other sources we find them graded roughly under three heads.

1. For the emperor and for princes through those of the second order the official garment showed four circular, five-clawed-dragon motives, the dragons on the emperor's robe all in front view. In addition the emperor wore the sun and moon symbols and the *wan* and

CHINESE TEXTILES

shou characters; the sons of emperors the same but omitting the *wan* and *shou* characters. Princes of the first order wore five-clawed dragons in front view on the front and back and profile dragons on the shoulders; princes of the second order four five-clawed dragons all in profile; princes of the third order two four-clawed dragons in front view; and princes of the fourth order, also husbands of daughters of the emperor by the empress, two four-clawed dragons in profile.

2. By nobles of the blood of the first degree, by husbands of daughters of the emperor by concubines, and by all other nobles the *pu fu*, or mandarin square, with the four-clawed dragon in front view was worn on the front and back of coats.

3. By the eighteen ranking officials the insignia listed below¹⁵ were worn.

| GRADE | BUTTONS | | BADGES (SO-CALLED MANDARIN SQUARES) | |
|-----------|----------------|-----------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| | <i>Color</i> | <i>Material</i> | <i>Civil</i> | <i>Military</i> |
| 1 | Red (plain) | Coral | White crane (figs. 16, 17) ¹⁶ | <i>Ch'i lin</i> (unicorn) |
| 2 | Red (chased) | Coral | Golden pheasant | Lion of India (leopard) (fig. 18) |
| 3 | Blue (clear) | Sapphire | Peacock | North China panther |
| 4 | Blue (opaque) | Lapis lazuli | Wild goose | Tiger of Manchuria |
| 5 | White (clear) | Rock crystal | Silver pheasant | Black bear |
| 6 | White (opaque) | Adularia | Eastern egret (fig. 8) | Mottled bear |
| 7 | Gold (plain) | Gold | Mandarin duck (fig. 10) | Tiger cat |
| 8 | Gold (chased) | Gold | Quail | Seal |
| 9 | Gold (chased) | Gold | Paradise fly-catcher | Fabulous bovine animal (rhinoceros?) |
| Unclassed | | | Chinese oriole | |

¹⁵ Giles, *Chinese-English Dictionary*, p. 1 of "Tables" (following p. 1711). ¹⁶ Commonly called the Manchurian crane.

These insignia were either embroidered or woven, and the cap showed a button of the proper color and material. Of the ranks of officials, the first is the highest. Furthermore, each of the nine ranks is divided into two classes, a principal and a subordinate; the only distinctions we can find in the insignia of this subdivision of rank are that the character of longevity is engraved on the button of the subordinate class, and that, according to some authorities, the bird or animal shown on the insignia of this class is always flying or running, while in the case of the principal grade, it is at rest. We have not been able to find conclusive proof, however, that these are official discriminations, but we offer them as possibilities.

There are in the Paul Bequest one hundred and seventy-five examples of these insignia which were selected for variety of workmanship and design. Not all of the birds and animals on these mandarin squares are faithfully portrayed, unfortunately, and we may after further study have to revise some of the present classifications. We think, however, that we have all nine of the civil ranks—the ninth, or paradise flycatcher, being the only one about which we are really in doubt. It is pertinent to note that while there are literally dozens of squares for each civil group represented (with the exception of the eighth, of which we have only a few examples), there are in the military group only five squares in all—one each of the first and seventh ranks and three of the second. We conclude therefore that the military officials

set greater store by their insignia than did the civil officials and have doubtless handed them down from one generation to another with jealous care that the foreigner should not find them in the markets.

An almost complete set of the insignia of the eighteen ranks may be seen in the Gallery of Fine Arts, Yale University, lent by Mrs. Julia St. Clair Krenz, and we have learned much by the comparison of our own pieces with the excellent examples in that collection, which is probably the most comprehensive in existence. It seems clear, for instance, that the larger type of square in *k'o ssü* or with a heavy gold background belonged to the Ming dynasty, a theory which is borne out by a study of costumes in Ming funerary paintings, and we hope in time to be able to assign any given insigne to the reign of a definite emperor by its size and style.

In addition to the dragon and the various birds and animals designating rank already mentioned, there are a number of other imaginary birds and animals all auguring good fortune. It is commonly said that as the dragon is the symbol of the emperor, so is the phoenix the symbol of the empress, and while in general this would seem to be true, it must be remembered that there are two phoenixes, and where it is designated as the *fêng-huang*, we have a dual creature, the *fêng* being the male and the *huang* the female, so that this phoenix may be a symbol of both the emperor and the empress.

The *ch'i lin*, or unicorn, is found frequently outside of the military insignia and belongs to the class of beasts of

good omen, as does the *hou*, a horned blue lion. The tiger is sometimes given as the symbol of physical strength, as opposed to the dragon, the symbol of spiritual strength and of the fluidity of water. The lion has been favored from very early times, but since the animal was not native to China, the Chinese began representing it as they imagined it from the stories which came from India, and besides picturing it with strange physical characteristics, they originated the legend that the lion cub, often depicted, especially in ceramics, under its mother's paw, obtained sustenance not from the breasts of the lioness but from her paw. The male lion is usually shown with his foot on a ball of brocade.

The religious symbols employed in the Buddhist and Taoist cults in China have become in our day interchangeable, and many of them are also put to secular use. The origin of these symbols seems to me to be definitely Buddhistic. We classify the most familiar of them under the following headings:

I. SYMBOLS OF ANCIENT CHINESE LORE

The *Pa-kua* and the *Yin-yang*. The *Pa-kua* ("Eight Trigrams") are the mystic symbols (fig. 24) supposed to have been found on the back of the dragon horse, and from them have developed the philosophy of divination and geomancy and the *I Ching*, the much venerated classic, which is quite as unintelligible to most Chinese as it is to foreigners. In the *Yin-yang* (fig. 24), symbol of the duality of Nature, *yin* is the female and

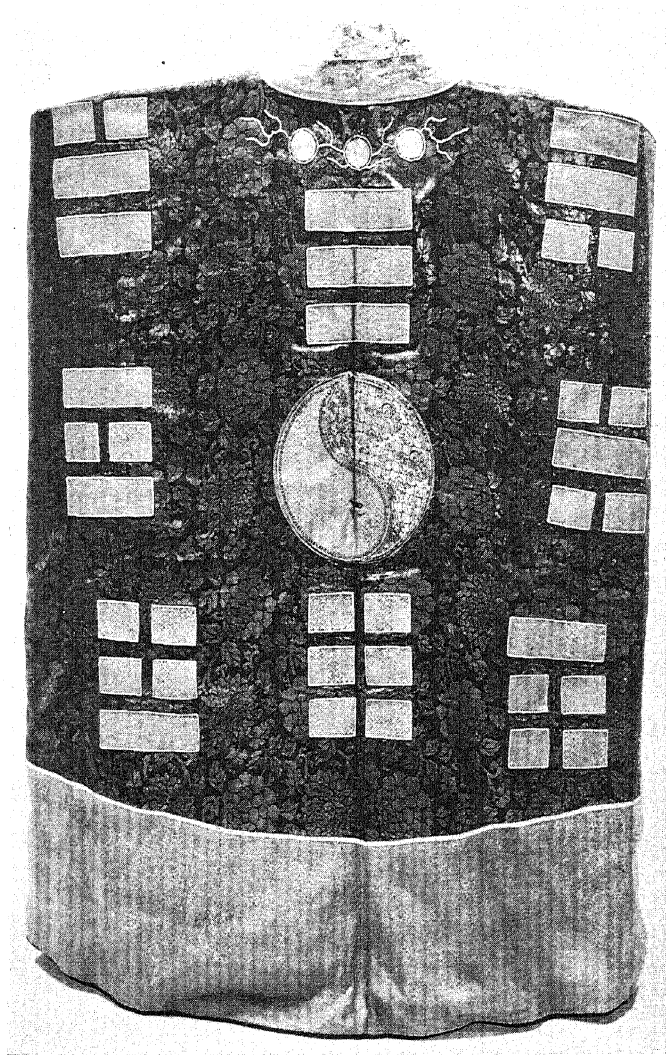


FIG. 24. TAOIST PRIEST ROBE SHOWING THE YIN-YANG
(CENTRAL MOTIVE) AND THE PA-KUA ("EIGHT
MYSTIC TRIGRAMS"), XIX CENTURY

yang the male element, and the symbol carries the idea of all the balancing factors in Nature, as the sun and moon, light and shade, heat and cold, etc.

The *Pa-yin* ("Eight Musical Instruments"), which are rarely found as a group and have not the importance of many of the other groups.

The *Shih êrh chang* (Twelve Symbols used on the emperor's sacrificial robe), already discussed and illustrated (pp. 54-56; figs. 22, 23).

II. BUDDHIST SYMBOLS

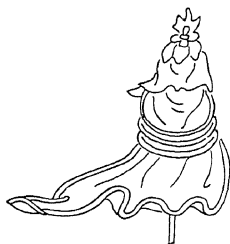
The *Pa pao* ("Eight Precious Things") (fig. 25), also called the *Pa chi hsiang* ("Eight Emblems of Happy Augury") to distinguish them from the other sets of Eight Precious Things got up by the Chinese in imitation of the Buddhist ones; they are the attributes and symbols of the Buddha Perfectly Enlightened—that is to say, the spiritual attributes.

1. The Parasol. The symbol of majesty which keeps away the "heat of evil desires."

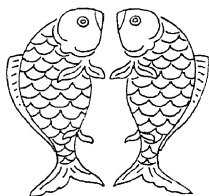
2. The Fish of Gold. Originally the emblem of Vishnu and Kama. The two fish together symbolize the joining of happiness and utility and in China also symbolize the *yang* and *yin*, or male and female elements.

3. The Vase. It contains the heavenly elixir called by the Chinese "sweet dew." It is the "treasury of all the desires."

4. The Lotus. The symbol of divine purity. It is the "pledge of salvation or Nirvāna."



THE PARASOL



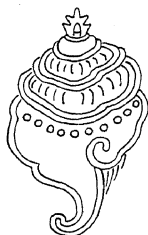
THE FISH OF GOLD



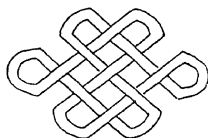
THE VASE



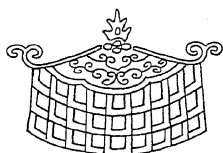
THE LOTUS



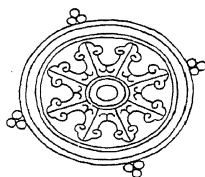
THE SEA SHELL



THE MYSTIC DIAGRAM



THE STANDARD



THE WHEEL

FIG. 25. THE PA PAO ("EIGHT PRECIOUS THINGS")
ALSO CALLED THE PA CHI HSIANG ("EIGHT EMBLEMS OF
HAPPY AUGURY"), FROM BUDDHIST SYMBOLISM

(Reproduced from drawings by L. F. Hall)

5. The Sea Shell. The symbol of holy victory, used to call the faithful to prayer. It is the symbol of the "blessedness of turning to the right."

6. The Mystic Diagram. The symbol of the "thread which guides to happiness." It is probably derived from the mystic mark on the belly of Vishnu.

7. The Standard. The symbol of the victory of Buddhism over other religions. It is the standard "erected on the summit of the palace of salvation."

8. The Wheel. The symbol of the Buddhist doctrine "which leads to perfection."

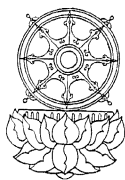
The *Ch'i pao* ("Seven Precious Things") (fig. 26), also called the *Ch'i chen* ("Seven Pearls"); they are the symbols of the attributes and dignities of the Universal Sovereign at once spiritual and temporal and chosen for the spread of the Buddhist religion.

1. The Precious Wheel, or Metal Disk. The wheel as in the *Pa pao* is the symbol of the Buddhist doctrine. In the form of the disk it is a symbol of the sun and a sign of the investiture of the monarch as the sovereign Cakravarti chosen for the spread of Buddhism throughout the universe.

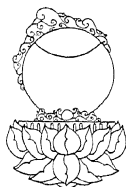
2. The Precious Jewel. The symbol of riches and the accomplishment of riches.

3. The Precious Woman. The symbol of the jewel among women and the precious wife.

4. The Precious Minister. The symbol of the best of ministers.



THE PRECIOUS WHEEL



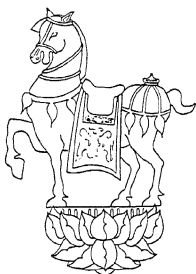
THE PRECIOUS JEWEL



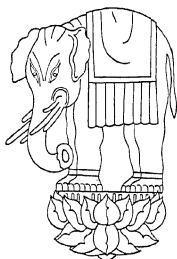
THE PRECIOUS WOMAN



THE PRECIOUS MINISTER



THE PRECIOUS HORSE



THE PRECIOUS ELEPHANT



THE PRECIOUS GENERAL

FIG. 26. THE CH'I PAO ("SEVEN PRECIOUS THINGS")
ALSO CALLED THE CH'I CHEN ("SEVEN PEARLS")
FROM BUDDHIST SYMBOLISM

(Reproduced from drawings by L. J. Longley)

5. The Precious Horse. The symbol of the best of horses. This noble animal is called Balahaka.

6. The Precious General. The symbol of the best of generals, whose sword of wisdom repels the enemies.

7. The Precious Elephant. The symbol of the best of elephants, which as the bearer of eighty-four thousand books symbolizes the infinite propagation of religion.

III. TAOIST SYMBOLS

The *Pa pao* ("Eight Precious Things") (fig. 27), also called the *Pa an hsien* ("Attributes of the Eight Immortals").

1. The Fan of Chung-li Ch'üan (also called Han Chung-li).

2. The Sword of Lü Tung Pin, the warrior Immortal, patron of barbers.

3. The Pilgrim's Gourd of Li T'ieh Kuai, patron of astrologers and magicians. From the gourd issue clouds and apparitions.

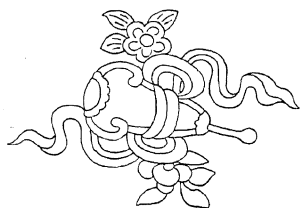
4. The Castanets of Ts'ao Kuo Chiu, patron of mums and actors.

5. The Flower Basket of Lan Ts'ai Ho, patron of gardeners and florists.

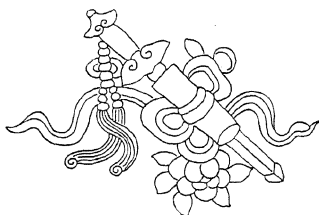
6. The Bamboo Tube and Rods of Chang Kuo Lao, patron of artists and calligraphers.

7. The Flute of Han Hsiang Tzū, patron of musicians.

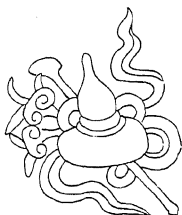
8. The Lotus of Ho Hsien Ku, patroness of housewives.



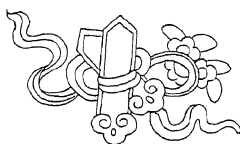
THE FAN



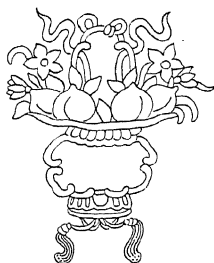
THE SWORD



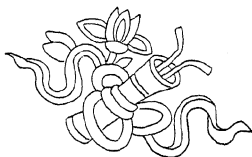
THE GOURD



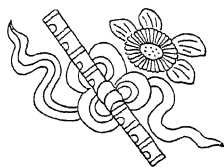
THE CASTANETS



THE FLOWER BASKET



THE BAMBOO TUBE
AND RODS



THE FLUTE



THE LOTUS

FIG. 27. THE PA PAO ("EIGHT PRECIOUS THINGS")
ALSO CALLED THE PA AN HSIEN ("ATTRIBUTES OF THE
EIGHT IMMORTALS"), FROM TAOIST SYMBOLISM

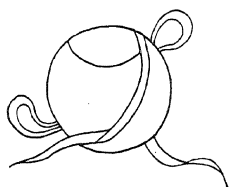
(Reproduced from drawings by L. F. Hall)

IV. SYMBOLS FROM THE HUNDRED ANTIQUES

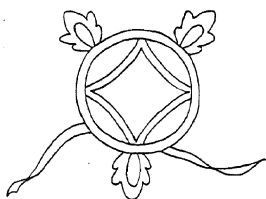
The *Po ku*. From these another set of *Pa pao* ("Eight Precious Things") is made (fig. 28), which might be designated as a secular category.

1. The Pearl that grants every wish.
2. The "Cash," a copper coin used to symbolize wealth.
3. The Painting.
4. The Lozenge, symbol of victory.
5. The Musical Stone.
6. The Pair of Books.
7. The Horn.
8. The Leaf of the *Artemisia*, a fragrant plant of good omen and a preventive of disease.

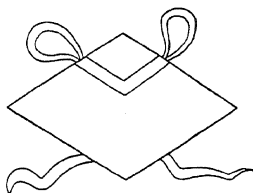
Favorite independent symbols of no definite origin but surely inspired by Buddhist ideas are a branch of coral, piles of jewels, a pair of paintings, and elephant tusks. These things are used *ad lib.* in secular and priestly robes and are derived, we think, from the heaps of offerings placed before the deities, a familiar subject in Buddhist paintings. A case in point is the swastika, in China called the *wan* character and used as a Buddhist symbol of good luck and as a synonym for the character also pronounced *wan* which means ten thousand, hence the symbol *wan shou* (ten thousand long lives). Another favorite representation is an assortment of books, brushes, vases, stands, etc., which symbolize the *Po ku*, or the Hundred Antiques. Nor must we forget such things as the crane, emblem of longevity; the "three friends"—the pine, the bamboo, and the plum; the four seasons—



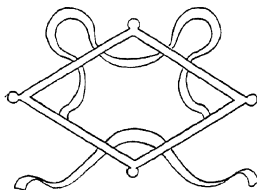
THE PEARL



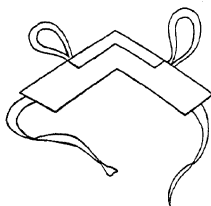
THE "CASH"



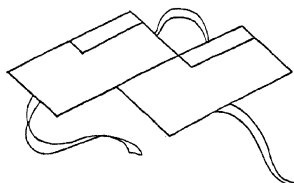
THE PAINTING



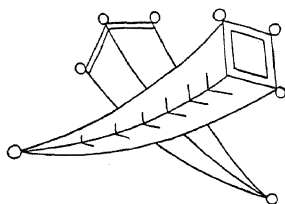
THE LOZENGE



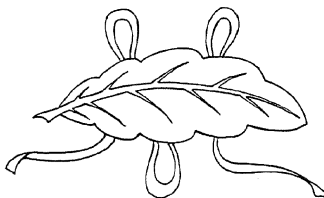
THE MUSICAL STONE



THE PAIR OF BOOKS



THE HORN



THE LEAF OF THE ARTEMISIA

FIG. 28. THE PA PAO ("EIGHT PRECIOUS THINGS")
FROM THE HUNDRED ANTIQUES (PO KU)
(Reproduced from drawings by L. J. Longley)

the plum, the peony, the orchid, and the chrysanthemum; and the ubiquitous bat, which symbolizes happiness, because the character for bat and the character for happiness are each pronounced *fu*. When there are five bats, they symbolize the five blessings of longevity, riches, peace, love of virtue, and "an end crowning the life," but this rebus is usually represented, for purposes of design, by four bats surrounding the *shou* character. Other rebus designs are suggested by such words as *lu* (deer), *lu* (preferment); *yü* (fish), *yü* (abundance); *ch'ing* (sounding stone), *ch'ing* (good luck); *ch'ang* (the intestinal knot), *ch'ang* (long); *tieh* (butterfly), *tieh* (to double). Since for every sound in the Chinese spoken language there are a considerable number of characters with different meanings, it is easily possible to read whole sentences out of any complicated decoration composed of these symbols. For instance, a design of nine lions sporting with balls of brocade (*chiu shih t'ung chü*), if spoken, may also mean "a family of nine sons living together." A brush, an ink cake, and the so-called *ju-i* scepter (*pi ting ju-i*), if spoken, may mean "May things be fixed according to your wish." The peach symbolizes immortality and the pomegranate fertility, the latter possibly an idea introduced from the Near East.

What the flaming jewel which appears with the dragon symbolizes has never been satisfactorily explained. It is sometimes given as the jewel of purity, and one hears sometimes that a robe showing the dragon depicted as

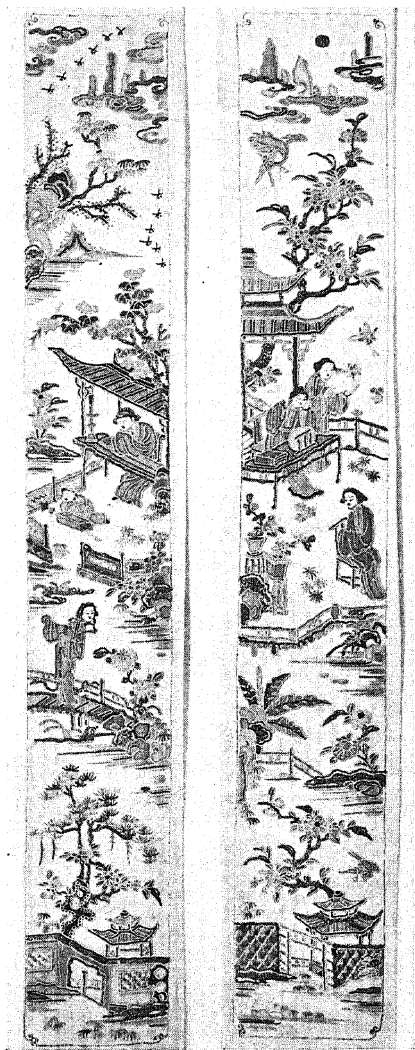


FIG. 29. PAIR OF SLEEVE BANDS
 THE EMBROIDERED DESIGN SHOWS A SCENE FROM THE
 HSI HSIANG CHI ("RECORD OF THE WESTERN CHAMBER")
 LATE XVIII CENTURY

actually gripping the jewel is supposed to be worn on the occasion of an eclipse, the old Chinese idea of an eclipse being that the dragon was about to swallow the sun or the moon, as the case might be.

The designs on the sleeve bands from women's robes are more frequently than not symbolical as well as decorative, some showing combinations of symbols, others categories of lucky things. Equally popular for sleeve-band designs are scenes from history and literature, among which scenes from the *Hung Lou Mên* ("Dream of the Red Chamber"), a great Chinese novel of the eighteenth century, and the *Hsi Hsiang chi* ("Record of the Western Chamber"), a poetic drama of about the thirteenth century, are favorites. A very charming illustration of one of these incidents may be found on the pair of sleeve bands shown in figure 29, where the popular talented-youth-and-beautiful-maiden theme is depicted. The episode is from the *Hsi Hsiang chi*. On one band Chang Shêng, the hero, is seen napping over his harp, after waiting for hours, no doubt, for the arrival of Ying Ying, and, seated on the floor, the page dozes off also. In the foreground crossing the bridge is the tardy Ying Ying on her way to Chang Shêng. The other band shows Lady Chêng, the mother of Ying Ying, on the following morning, seated before her mirror as she dresses her hair, assisted by the maid, Hung Niang. Ying Ying sits pensively by, with a distinctly self-conscious look as she waits to learn whether her visit has been found out by her mother.

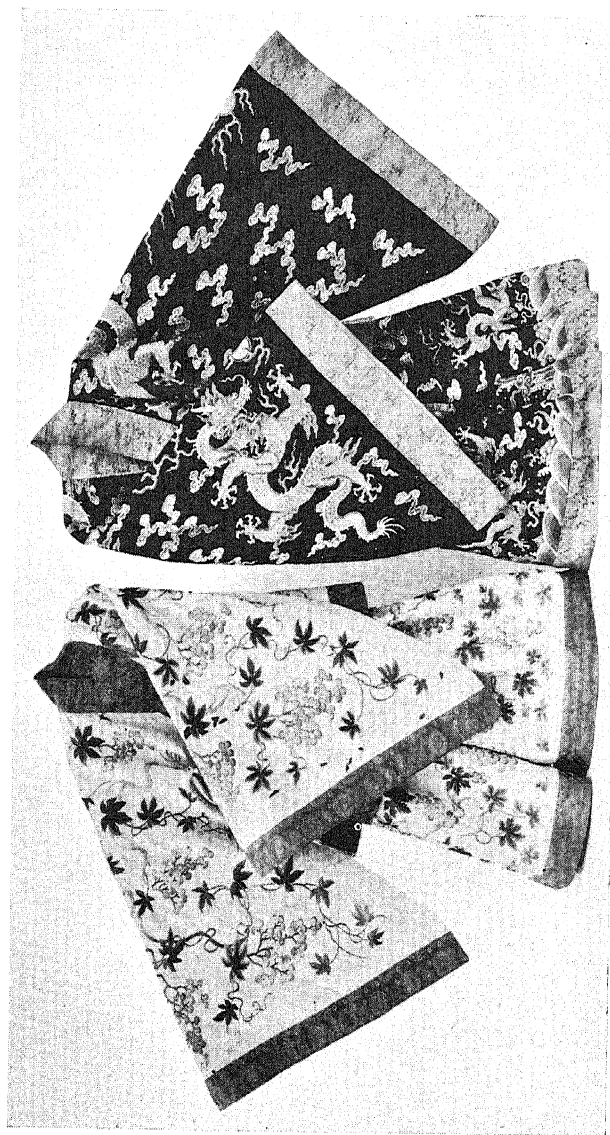


FIG. 30. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL COSTUMES FOR COURT LADIES
XVIII CENTURY

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

The Museum acquired in the Paul Bequest some two hundred and sixty-four pairs of sleeve bands and eighteen skirts, which offer a valuable field for study, not only of the symbols and folklore, but also of the endless combinations of stitches and color designs. And what has been said about the sleeve bands is true of the various types of small objects—fan cases, mirror holders, bags, spectacle cases, pocketbooks, and so on.

THEATRICAL ROBES

The theater, the playhouse where men go to see their fantasies enacted, where each man attains visions of nobility and splendor and the heights which in his heart he dreams of attaining—this stage becomes the release from the bitterness of reality, the gorgeous dream of life, an Iliad, a Morte d'Arthur, where splendid heroes strive and sacrifice. The words, the songs flow grandly and the color and movement are heightened and exaggerated, pitched in a harmonious scale beyond reality.

In a land where the court was so gorgeous, the theater must needs outdo itself in order to separate itself from the reality, and by exaggerating the contours of the garments, pitching the color scheme to its fullest violence, and employing large and vivid design, it succeeds admirably. In the modern theater—and probably in the ordinary theater of past years—the materials employed are cheap but the result is consistent and, on the stage with its artificial lighting, entirely successful; but lately



FIG. 31. BACK VIEW OF AN IMPERIAL THEATRICAL ROBE
FOR A BUDDHIST PRIEST
XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 32. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL COSTUME FOR A COURT LADY
PHOENIX-FEATHER DESIGN
XVIII CENTURY



FIG. 33. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL ROBE
FOR A FEMALE WARRIOR
XVIII CENTURY

we have become able for the first time to see what the theater of the court must have been in its full splendor under the reign of Ch'ien Lung. A large group of cos-

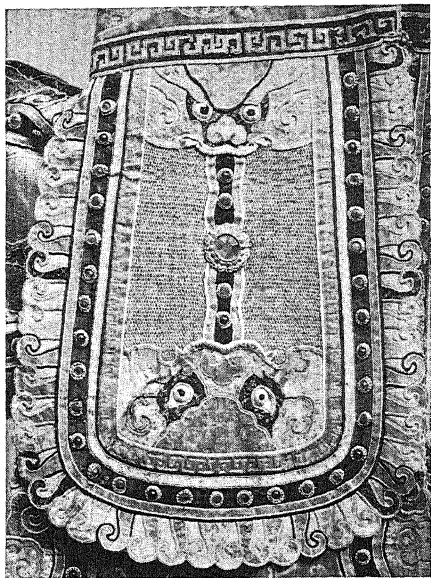


FIG. 34. DETAIL OF THE WARRIOR'S ROBE
SHOWN IN FIGURE 35

tumes acquired by the Museum in 1930, carefully preserved and in their full freshness of color and texture, are certainly from the imperial storage. These things are extraordinary in workmanship and design and some of them are stamped with the seal of the imperial theater. The skirts abnormally full, the sleeves sweeping and in

CHINESE TEXTILES

great triangles (see fig. 30), broadly and vividly designed, scarlet with a scroll of phoenixes outlined with gold, green with a pattern of jewels as shining almost as



FIG. 35. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL ROBE
FOR A WARRIOR, WITH SKIRT
XVIII CENTURY

the actual stones, pale gray with a great sweep of phoenix feathers (fig. 32)—these are the costumes by which the ladies of the court are represented. The Taoists, whose ceremonial robes are gay enough in everyday life and on the stage must be even gaudier, are here represented by two robes showing a dazzling combination of

checks in salmon pink and blue and black patchwork, embroidered with clusters of flowers. It is our opinion that the magnificent needlework robe formerly in the



FIG. 36. DETAIL OF THE WARRIOR'S ROBE
SHOWN IN FIGURE 37

collection of Louis V. Ledoux is also a court theatrical robe, and the large medallions of bats (fig. 13) suggest the Taoist symbolism. These three robes are not representations of ceremonial garb but rather of the daily costume of Taoist priests, or Followers of the Way.

The symbolic patchwork of the Buddhist priest in the

CHINESE TEXTILES

theater is in general patterned after the orthodox garment, the luminous squares of brocade a shimmer of gold on red, mauve, blue, and yellow (fig. 31).



FIG. 37. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL ROBE FOR A WARRIOR
IMPORTED VELVET AND BROCADE
XVIII CENTURY (REMODELED WITH XIX CENTURY VELVET)

The representation of court armor in the warrior robes is skillful and effective, with their panels of heavy looped gold thread (see figs. 34, 35) or of an interlacing design of embroidery representing chain armor and bits of varicolored brocade for an edging of tiger's claws

(see fig. 38). In some instances the robes are studded with buttons of eighteenth-century glass. An especially charming example is a female warrior's robe (fig. 33) where the glass buttons are interspersed amongst crosses of gold appliqué. One warrior robe is made of imported velvet with panels of imported brocade (figs. 36, 37) but is embroidered and appliquéd with the usual exaggerated warrior motives of the Chinese theater, resulting in a magnificent incongruity.

In contrast to the eighteenth-century theatrical robes are three of nineteenth-century type which we believe to be from the imperial theater—a three-piece costume representing a woman's wedding garments, an emperor's robe of gigantic proportions in green satin with gold dragons,¹⁷ and a court dancer's robe embellished with innumerable streamers and cloud collars.

PRIEST ROBES

The priest robes are of several varieties. The straight rectangular type was traditionally used by Buddhist priests, and also a variant of it in which one end is gored. This robe as it is worn is suggestive of the Roman toga (see fig. 31). It is draped under the right arm and over the left shoulder, where it falls in a vertical line and is held in place by a cord and a jade ring fastened in front on the left side. The Lamaist Buddhist robe is practically square, with one side cut to the middle and shaped into

¹⁷ On loan from Dr. Hammond.



FIG. 38. IMPERIAL THEATRICAL ROBE FOR A WARRIOR
XVIII CENTURY

a collar, so that when it is worn, the effect is like that of the old-fashioned army poncho. The shape of the Taoist robe imitates that of the Lamaist. The robe of the orthodox Buddhist priest, while it may employ the most gorgeous materials, either is actually composed of small pieces sewed together or is woven to simulate pieces—a symbolic representation of the rags which Buddha wore. The example in the Paul Bequest is of a tapestry weave, and the five-clawed dragon indicates that the wearer must have been of the imperial family or at least employed in one of the imperial temples. One is tempted to associate this robe with the Emperor Shun Chih, who is commonly believed not to have died in 1661, as history records, but to have quietly abdicated and retired to be the abbot of T'ien T'ai Shan, a small but rich temple which stands in the hills west of Peking.

The Lama robes are gorgeous, many of them entirely covered with rich embroidery and strips of flat gold paper. The dating of these Lama robes is difficult, and there is also the question of what was done in Tibet and what in China. The answer to the latter question is, we think, that most of them were done in China, and though we are tempted to date both Dr. Hammond's and the Paul robe (details in figs. 39, 40) in the Ming dynasty, it is more logical to believe that they are no older than the reign of K'ang Hsi, because the rise of the Lamaist Buddhist church in China is associated definitely with the Ch'ing dynasty and especially with K'ang Hsi. The Lamaist hierarchy had been a political power in Tibet



FIG. 39. SECTION OF BORDER SHOWING CH'I LIN
AND DRAGON-CARP MOTIVES

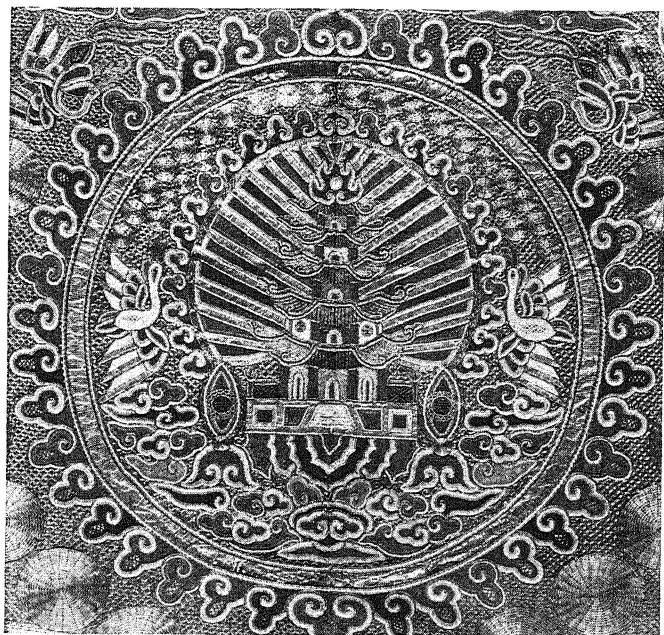


FIG. 40. MEDALLION WITH SACRED PAGODA
DETAILS OF XVII CENTURY LAMAIST PRIEST ROBE

since the eleventh century and after the reforms of Ts'on-k'a-pa in the fifteenth century gradually assumed more and more authority. By the mid-seventeenth century the Dalai and Panshan Lamas were busy ingratiating themselves with the Manchus, who were on the point of overthrowing the Mings. When the Manchus did become the Ch'ing dynasty they promoted Lamaist Buddhism in China mostly for its political significance, but quite probably too because they were more at home with it, and it seems probable that the most magnificent of the Lamaist priest robes date from the reign of K'ang Hsi. And how many of the thousands of people who acquire Manchu court chains realize that they were derived from Lamaist rosaries and were one of the many Manchu innovations?

As we have said, the Taoist robes imitate the Lama robes in shape and interchange many of their symbols. The poor Taoists have few friends among students of the East and there is little enough written about them, yet save for the Confucianists they have been the great preservers of native Chinese tradition and of the native gods. Unfortunately, after the success of Buddhism they set about imitating the Buddhist pantheon, and later, in these robes (see fig. 41¹⁸), they took to imitating the new and successful Tibetan cult. Nevertheless, they survive to this day and their temples are often more richly filled with offerings than those of their rivals, and it cannot be denied that when they appear for public ceremonies

¹⁸ This robe is a loan from Dr. Hammond.



FIG. 41. TAOIST PRIEST ROBE
CRANES OF LONGEVITY ON A FIELD OF CLOUDS; IMPERIAL DRAGONS
EARLY XIX CENTURY

in their bright loosely patterned robes and tinkling bands, they are charmingly gay and not at all the monsters of depraved magic which so many would have us think them.

SUMMER ROBES

In the great heat of summer, the court and the whole country went into thin silk and gauze, the court garments bearing the same emblems of rank and dignity as the more formal ones, but of materials fragile and delicate, cool to look at, fresh and varied in color as a garden. Most of these date toward the end of the Ch'ing dynasty, but some are earlier, notably an imperial robe of fine petit point (a detail of this is illustrated in fig. 12), the ground color ecru and the pattern worked in soft blues, dull orange, dull yellow, sparkling with dots of violet, a thing as lovely and varied as a night moth's wing. The male civilian's costumes are usually of a solid color, sometimes with a woven pattern, but the female costumes, of which the Museum has numerous examples, are gay as butterflies, clear in color and embroidered with lotus blossoms, orchids, and the exotic goldfish of the gardens where their wearers walked. Imagine for a moment the great gardens of China in the summer, with their majestic trees and cool courts, their lotus pools and tortuous rock gardens, their moon gateways and singing insects, and then imagine these costumes as they must have appeared in this harmonious setting.

CHINESE DYNASTIES

| | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Hsia | | 2205-1766 B. C. |
| Shang | | 1766-1122 B. C. |
| Chou | | 1122- 256 B. C. |
| Ch'in | | 256- 206 B. C. |
| Han | | 206 B. C. - A. D. 220 |
| | Western Han | 206 B. C. - A. D. 25 |
| | Eastern Han | A. D. 25 - 220 |
| Three Kingdoms | | A. D. 220 - 265 |
| | Wei | A. D. 220 - 265 |
| | Shu Han | A. D. 221 - 264 |
| | Tung Wu | A. D. 222 - 280 |
| Chin | | A. D. 265 - 420 |
| Six Dynasties, or Southern and Northern Dynasties | | |
| | Southern Dynasties | A. D. 420 - 589 |
| | Sung | A. D. 420 - 479 |
| | Ch'i | A. D. 479 - 502 |
| | Liang | A. D. 502 - 557 |
| | Ch'en | A. D. 557 - 589 |
| | Northern Dynasties | A. D. 386 - 589 |
| | N. Wei | A. D. 386 - 557 |
| | (Including W. Wei) | |
| | E. Wei | A. D. 534 - 550 |
| | (Absorbed by N. Ch'i) | |
| | N. Ch'i | A. D. 550 - 577 |
| | (Absorbed by N. Chou) | |
| | N. Chou | A. D. 557 - 589 |
| Sui | | A. D. 589 - 618 |
| T'ang | | A. D. 618 - 906 |

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| | | |
|----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Five Dynasties | | A. D. 906 - 960 |
| Sung | | A. D. 960 - 1280 |
| | N. Sung | A. D. 960 - 1127 |
| | S. Sung | A. D. 1127 - 1280 |
| Yüan | | A. D. 1280 - 1368 |
| Ming | | A. D. 1368 - 1644 |
| | Hung Wu | A. D. 1368 - 1398 |
| | Chien Wên | A. D. 1399 - 1402 |
| | Yung Lo | A. D. 1403 - 1424 |
| | Hung Hsi | A. D. 1425 |
| | Hsüan Tê | A. D. 1426 - 1435 |
| | Chêng T'ung | A. D. 1436 - 1449 |
| | Ching T'ai | A. D. 1450 - 1456 |
| | T'ien Shun | A. D. 1457 - 1464 |
| | Ch'êng Hua | A. D. 1465 - 1487 |
| | Hung Chih | A. D. 1488 - 1505 |
| | Chêng Tê | A. D. 1506 - 1521 |
| | Chia Ching | A. D. 1522 - 1566 |
| | Lung Ch'ing | A. D. 1567 - 1572 |
| | Wan Li | A. D. 1573 - 1619 |
| | T'ai Ch'ang | A. D. 1620 |
| | T'ien Ch'i | A. D. 1621 - 1627 |
| | Ch'ung Chêng | A. D. 1628 - 1643 |
| Ch'ing | | A. D. 1644 - 1912 |
| | Shun Chih | A. D. 1644 - 1661 |
| | K'ang Hsi | A. D. 1662 - 1722 |
| | Yung Chêng | A. D. 1723 - 1735 |
| | Ch'ien Lung | A. D. 1736 - 1795 |
| | Chia Ch'ing | A. D. 1796 - 1820 |
| | Tao Kuang | A. D. 1821 - 1850 |
| | Hsien Fêng | A. D. 1851 - 1861 |
| | T'ung Chih | A. D. 1862 - 1874 |
| | Kuang Hsü | A. D. 1875 - 1908 |
| | Hsüan T'ung | A. D. 1909 - 1911 |
| Republican Era | | A. D. 1912 - |

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